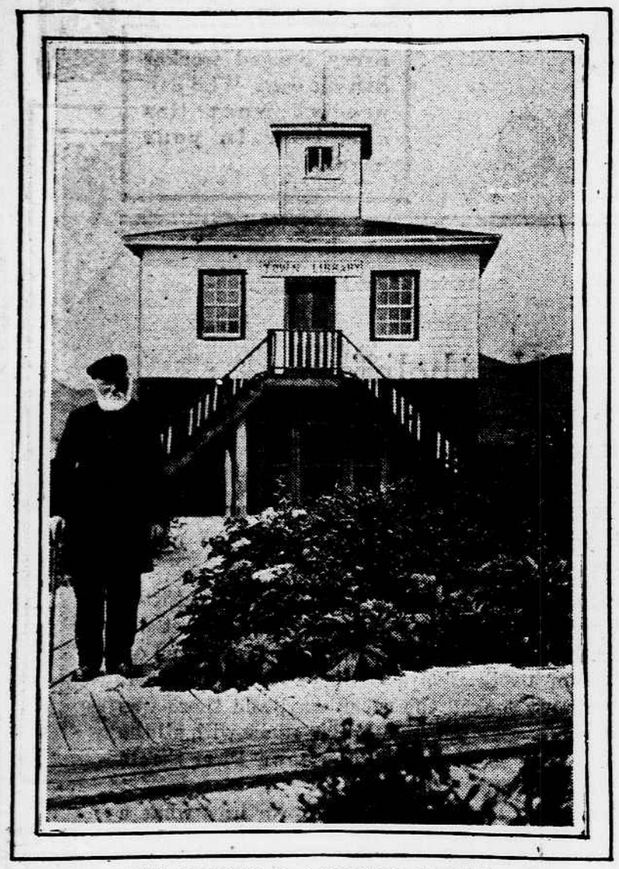
A Visit With Tsimpsean Indians of Annette Island

FRANK G. CARPENTER Writes of Father Duncan and His Work—Missionary Tells of the Education of Former Cannibals and How They Tried to Kill Him When He First Went Among Them—The Town of Metlakahtla—How the Indians Were Given Their Present Land, Having Gone There From British Columbia Thirty Years Ago.



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ANNETTE ISLAND, Alaska.

I HAVE come to Annette Island to visit Metlakahtla. This is the seat of the Indian colony brought here from British Columbia by Father Duncan, now almost thirty years ago. Every one has heard of Father Duncan's wonderful work with the Indians. He is now eighty-four years of age and is still strong and full of vigor. He is sometimes called the apostle of Alaska, and his work with these Indians gives him a right to the title. Mr. Duncan began life as a commercial traveler in England, and at twenty-one he was well on his way toward a salary of $5,000 a year. He was naturally religious, and he decided to give up his work and become a missionary. He went to college expecting to be sent out to India, but instead he was ordered to go to the western coast of British Columbia to work with a tribe of Indians, known as the Tsimpsean.

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These Tsimpsean Indians were then among the most barbarous of any on the North American continent. They believed in witch doctors and were given over to cannibalism. They were hunters and fishers and clothed themselves in the skins of bears and wolves. They had weird dances, during which they wore the skulls of bears on their heads. They had medicine men who wore masks and who tried to frighten off disease with hideous noises. If the demon of disease did not leave, the witch doctors would hack away the sore places on the body of the patient with their knives, or suck or burn away the ailing flesh. They pointed out children and others as possessed of evil spirits and as being witches, and in such cases the tribe felt they must kill those so afflicted.

The Indians had also curious customs regarding the treatment of their women. Young girls approaching womanhood were confined far away in isolated cabins, and when brought back were supposed to have dropped down from the moon and to be ready for marriage. On such occasions there was great feasting, and the youths of the tribes were initiated into dog eating, cannibalism and devil dancing. The Indians believed in spirits, and they had certain theories as to the transmigration of souls. On the whole, they were on a very low scale of civilization.

When Father Duncan arrived in Victoria on his way to this work he was told that if he went on to the Indians he would surely be killed. The man who gave him the warning was the head of the Hudson Bay Company, who, when Duncan still insisted, said: "Well, my good man, if you are to be killed and eaten I suppose you are the one most interested, and we shall have to let you do as you wish."

With this permission, Father Duncan was allowed to go to Fort Simpson, not far from Prince Rupert, and he there began work. The story of how he narrowly escaped being murdered and how he gradually worked his way into the confidence of the savages I shall tell later as he gave it to me during my stay.

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It is enough here to say that he converted eight or nine of these tribes to the Christian religion and made them about the most law-abiding and civilized people of the Indian race. They had their own council and they governed themselves. They had their own boats and they established a canning factory and put up salmon for shipment. They learned to make ropes and brushes, to weave and to spin. Mr. Duncan went to England and brought back musical instruments and they established a brass band. They had a schoolhouse and a church with an organ, which they were able to play. They had their market house, their shops, their carpenters, tinners, coopers and other mechanics. They kept the Sabbath and led moral lives. What has taken ages to accomplish with other peoples these Indians, under Father Duncan, accomplished in less than thirty years.

It was at this time that the Church of England began to meddle with Father Duncan's experiments, sending over a bishop to rule over him and the Indians. Father Duncan found that his work was being undone, and he then asked the United States to allow his Indians to settle on our territory. That was in 1887. The matter was much agitated in the United States. Father Duncan was supported by Henry Ward Beecher, Phillips Brooks and others, and through their efforts a territory was allotted to him and his Indians on the northwestern side of this island. They came in August and the first thing they did was to erect a flagpole and hoist the Stars and Stripes. They next had speeches by H. R. Dawson, the United States commissioner of education, and by Father Duncan, and later on divine service consisting of song and praise in the Tsimpsean language.

The next day a sawmill was unloaded, and the people began at once to clear the forests and erect the buildings for their new homes. They built a cannery and year by year added to their structures until they had a town hall, a great church, a schoolhouse, a store, a public library and the other buildings necessary to an intelligent Christian and civilized community. They put up comfortable homes with gardens of vegetables and flowers, and, in short, established the most advanced native community in the western part of the North American continent.

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The settlement was called the New Metlakahtla and since then the Indians have been known as the Metlakahtlans. In 1891 Annette Island was set aside by Congress as a reservation for them and it was provided that it should be used by them in common under such rules and regulations as might be prescribed by the Secretary of the Interior.

I wish I could show you Annette Island. It is one of the most beautiful parts of southeastern Alaska. It is fifteen miles long and ten miles wide and is formed by a long mountain on the backbone of which are a number of beautiful lakes. The mountain is wooded and it assumes a purple tinge under the cloudy sky. About Port Chester the land slopes gently down to the sea. Here the trees have been cut away and a few hundred acres have been cleared and divided up into town lots for the buildings. At the left as you come into the harbor you see a silvery cascade tumbling down the slope of the mountain. It comes from Lake Chester, a short distance inland and at an elevation of 850 feet above the sea.

The most conspicuous building in the town is a great white frame structure with two towers. This is the Westminster Abbey of Metlakahtla. It is Father Duncan's church and was built by the Indians at a cost of $12,000. It is the largest church in Alaska, and will comfortably seat 500 people.

On the left of the church is the government school recently erected by the United States, and still farther away is Father Duncan's guest house, his office, his school and the great store which he built to supply the needs of the people.

Right at the dock is a salmon cannery which has at times been a very profitable undertaking, giving work to all the people and bringing in a great deal to the colony. Its capacity is about a million cans of salmon per annum, and connected with it is a box-making establishment where are made the 20,000 cases or boxes used for shipping the fish. At times as many as 10 0 salmon have been handled in a single day, and altogether a great many million cans have been shipped to the markets.

One of the striking buildings of the new Metlakahtla is the library and jail. This is painted in the colors of the American flag.

The first story is bright red; it is the jail. The second story is snow white; it is the library. The cupola on the top is bright blue.

Close to the beach and running back from it toward these public buildings are the homes of the people. They are several hundred in number, and they were all built by the Indians and with money which they have earned in connection with Father Duncan. The houses are cottages of one and two stories. They have glass windows, porches and comfortable surroundings. Each has a lot about eighty feet front and ninety feet deep, and each faces upon one of the wide boardwalks that form the highways and streets of the settlement. Each house has its garden. Some have patches of potatoes, others have flowers of various colors. Wherever there is an uncultivated spot salmonberry and elderberry bushes and fire weed have grown to the height of your waist. The whole country about is clad in perennial green.

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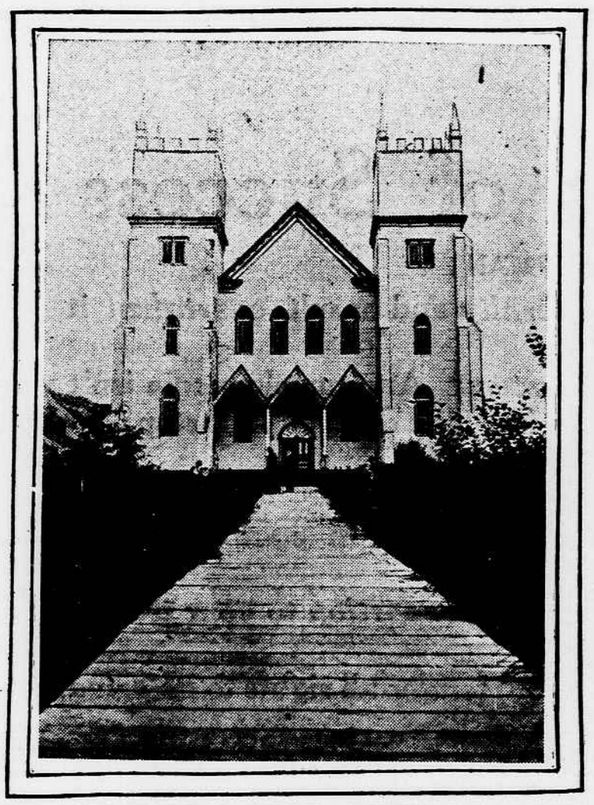
Landing, I walked from the wharf over the long boardwalk to the offices of Father Duncan. He has one building which is his combined study and home. It is one of the plainest of the whole settlement, and is small in comparison with the twelve-room guest house nearby, which he has put up for those who come to see him and his flock. I knocked on the door, and a moment later Father Duncan stood before me.

I had expected to meet a giant with a figure and face that might have recalled Abraham or Moses. Instead I saw a short, stocky, roughly clad little old man. Father Duncan is of less than medium height, and he weighs not more than 150 pounds. He has a large head, a bit bald at the crown, but beyond that thatched with silvery white hair. His face is as rosy as that of a baby when exposed to the winds of the winter, and his eyes are as blue as the skies that cover his island. He has a heavy white beard, and his face is a benediction. His eyes radiate kindliness, and I was impressed with his sincerity and his honesty. As I looked at him I could not realize that he was eighty-four years of age, and when he spoke his voice was like that of a man in his prime.

Our first talk was about the Indians as he found them when he came to British Columbia. The old man's eyes flashed as he told of his fights with the officers of the Hudson Bay Company, and they grew sad as he spoke of the savages. I asked him whether the Indians were really cannibals when he found them, and whether he had actually seen them eating each other. He replied that he had seen a woman killed, and had seen the savages eating a boy who had died on the beach. That was almost sixty years ago. He tells me that many of the tribes along the coast of British Columbia at that time were cannibals, and that there were other cannibals north and south of the Tsimpseans among whom he worked. Some of the tribes were more addicted to the eating of human flesh than others. Cannibalism was a part of their religion, and was connected with the rites of their medicine men.



FATHER DUNCAN'S CHURCH. IT IS THE LARGEST IN ALASKA, AND WILL SEAT 500 PEOPLE.

Upon my asking him as to the people he had seen eaten, he first cited the case of the woman referred to above. He said:

"I had heard of the cannibalism, and one day an officer of the fort ran into my house and told me the Indians were about to kill one of their women. He warned me to keep in and said that I would surely be killed if I attempted to interfere. A moment later another man rushed in and said that the woman had already been killed. We went out to the beach where the crowd of Indians was. They were divided into two bands, each led by a brave who was stark naked. All were howling horribly. They had killed a woman and cut her in half and each of the nude Indian leaders was carrying his half of the woman in his teeth. As we came up the bands separated and each gathered around its leader. They were so crowded together that I could not see. They sat down in two great bunches on the sand. When they got up not a vestige of the woman was to be seen. What became of the flesh I do not know, but I was told it was eaten, and that all had engaged in the feast."

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"Do you mean to say that they ate the flesh without cooking it?"

"Yes, they must have eaten it raw, for, as I say, the woman disappeared. They may have buried the bones in the sand. I doubt, however, whether the flesh agreed with them, for the officers of the Hudson Bay Company fort nearby told me that it was the custom of the Indians after every such cannibal feast to come into the post the day following and buy large quantities of epsom salts."

"You spoke of seeing a boy killed, Father Duncan?"

"No, I did not see him killed. The boy died of consumption. His body was laid out upon the beach and it was there eaten by the people."

At another point in the conversation I asked Dr. Duncan about some of the attempts made to kill him. He described them most graphically, and as he talked I could see that he was again living over the past. He rose to his feet and acted the story, his eyes flashing and his arms waving gestures. He told me how one of the chiefs tried to close his school, being incited, as Father Duncan thought, by the officers of the Hudson Bay Company, who wanted to get rid of him. In one such case a chief demanded that Father Duncan close the school because his beautiful daughter was just about to drop down from the moon to be married. The chief said that she had gone away and would come back in great state. She would drop from the moon into the sea and would rise out of the water with a bearskin over her shoulders and thus appear to the people. At this time there would be many ceremonies that would prevent the school being held.

Said Father Duncan: "I refused to stop the school. The Indians threatened to kill me, but I kept the school open. Then they begged me to give up the school just one week prior to the young lady's drop from the moon. I told them that she might fall, but that the school would go on. They then wanted me to stop for a day, but I refused and would make no compromise with their superstition. On the day before the event was to occur two men came to kill me. They had knives and they were about to jump upon me when they saw my teacher, an Indian who has taught me the language, standing behind me. The teacher had a pistol under his blanket, and this bulged out in such a way that the Indians knew it and realized that they would be shot if they stabbed me. You see, the Indian never works in the open. If he shoots it is usually through a blanket concealing his gun. Well, to make a long story short, they gave up their design and afterward one of them came back and tried to prove to me that he was a good man."

It was from such material as this that Dr. Duncan created the civilized community of the Metlakahtla of the present. The community has its own preachers and its own public speakers. Some of the sermons in the Tsimpsean language are full of eloquence and beauty. Here, for instance, is one urging the people to believe that the Savior will take care of them:

"Brethren and sisters: You know the eagle and its ways. The eagle flies high. The eagle rests high. It always rests on the highest branch of the highest tree. We should be like the eagle. We should rest on the highest branch of the highest tree. That branch is Jesus Christ. When we rest on Him all our enemies will be below and far beneath us."

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Another preacher who had formerly been vicious and high-tempered, speaking of himself, said:

"I will tell you what I feel myself to be. I am like a bundle of weeds floating down the stream. I was going down with all my sin, like the weeds, covered with earth and filth; but I came to the rapids, when lo! there was a pole stuck fast and firm in the rock, and I clutched at the pole, and there I am now. The stream is passing by and washing away my filth. Christ to me is the pole. I hold to Him and am safe."

I might cite other quotations to show the civilization, intelligence and piety of the Metlakahtlans. They are far above the average of their race and they are now aspiring to a higher education and to full United States citizenship in which they shall own their land in severalty. It is in connection with this that the government has established the large public school of which I have spoken, and it is also giving them a greater voice in their own government and in the administration of their own business. Much of this has been done in opposition to and against the protests of Father Duncan, who thinks the Indians should be treated more like children, and that their education should be almost altogether a religious and industrial one. There is a division of opinion among the Metlakahtlans as to which theory is the right one, and the friction at present existing is not good for the community. Every one will concede that a great deal of consideration should be shown Father Duncan, and it is hoped that the matter can be so handled as to give the Indians all civic rights and the best of educational facilities without destroying the Christian spirit of brotherly love that has existed between them and Father Duncan from the beginning.

I close my letter with the Lord's prayer in Tsimpsean:

"Wee-Nahgwah-dum koo tsim lachahgah. Nclootiksh ah Noo-wahnt. Shahaksheah ntsabbany. Shah-koad-kan tum wahl ab halletsohamee. Ne-wahltkshtsim lachah-gah. Kinnam klahgam ah chah quah ahm shkabboo wenayah. Kamkoadan ah naht-ahtackamee, newahl-dah dee willah ham hoadamum ah haht-ach-ah-deah gam; Killohmdsah tahtaink umt shpiet t'in shpahlt koadumt; addah mah al tillahmantkum ah haht-ah-hahdat; Ahwill n'tsabbaniat, addah nahkat k'tsondat, tilth n'cloadant, addah tum ciah-willah wahl. Amen."

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

FRANK G. CARPENTER VISITS FATHER DUNCAN.

America's Supply of Old Clothes for the Poor of Belgium Is Exhausted

Special Correspondence of The Star.

LONDON, February 3.

AMERICAN eyes would have been held by a certain comedy on the streets of Liege this fall—Liege, the first city in the world war to resist and the first to fall, and where there has been precious little comedy for eighteen months.

The writer was there during the early chill of the autumn, when the war had already passed into its second year. It was a cold day and the poor had made a rush on America's stocks of old clothes. These castoffs were stored in an improvised warehouse, once a Belgian armory. A long line of idle workers stood at the door, nipped by the frost while they waited. The people looked cowed. No one talked. Their clothing was small protection against the advancing cold. Slowly the big structure swallowed them up. Steadily what was left inside of the great terminal moraine of American charity melted away, garment by garment.

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Then people with bundles began to emerge from a side door, and the change came. Suddenly the streets were full of sound; you could hear the noise in the next street. A dumb, inert mass had gone in, but living individuals came out, flushed with excitement, talking, human again.

The uproar came from old people gathered about a bundle they had just opened on the sidewalk, from a big man who was measuring himself with a small coat, from women enchanted by the vision of flannel petticoats, from small boys with new mufflers.

"Ca, c'est magnifique—mais droll!" "Voila! Je suis maintenant une petite Americaine!" "Et le veston! C'est actuellement de laine!" "Vive L'Amerique!"

There were humor and joy and amazement—perhaps more humor than anything else. Not alone the clothes caused it all; it was partly the kind of clothes, which were spacious as only Yankee workshops make them, and of a design new and wonderful to European peasants. Down the street the crowd moved, straggling—bent backs and strong young ones, thin women and fat, boys and sallow girls and babies, their sabots clattering on the hard stones.

As they went they changed, pulling on the new garments over the old.

Women who had been shawled and aproned a moment before, and men in sleezy, factory-made garments, became strange caricatures of American fashions of 1914, 1912, of 1905 and 1900—as far back as 1880. Bodies squirmed into sweaters that still kept the stripes of American universities; chapped necks and thin chests were covered with other forms of wool; arms dangled from faded coats that had done duty in Toledo or Seattle or Atlanta. Buffalo coats from the Dakotas were there; caps with ear-flaps such as they wear up near the Canada line in snowy weather; wristlets and socks and chest protectors; Fauntleroy suits and split skirts; fleece-lined underwear, and tennis shoes, and pink bath robes, and corduroy trousers, and silk shirt waists, and linen vests.

It was a strange by-product of war, this masquerade on the streets of conquered Liege. But it happened every day during that early cold spell.

It was not so startling after that, as the automobile of the commission for relief went through the wind-swept countrysides to find a gaunt peasant—sociable, diligent, extremely ignorant and extremely likable being that he is—who has frequently never been twice in his life beyond the limits of his own parish—emerging from a patch of sugar beets with "Harvard" or "Stanford" sewn into the front of his sweater. Or to note that the young woman behind, balancing a huge basket on her head, wore an importation that must have been particularly smart three seasons ago on Lake Shore drive.

That was the old method of relieving Belgium, and it died when the last of America's old clothes were used up toward the end of 1915. A year and a half ago, when Belgium's need was megaphoned to the four winds, the world emptied its old clothes into expensive liners and hurried them to Europe. Up to the end of last June the commission for relief had acknowledged the receipt of $125,000,000 of these goods. The stream of relief was an unheard-of outpouring; it earned unheard-of gratitude; it was touching, funny, dramatic—but it will never be repeated.

In the first place, no one can stand the expense. For it cost money to transport each garment from American doorsteps to Belgian backs; the fumigation in Belgium required by the military authorities cost more money. It was possible to raise these sums before the world realized that the business of keeping Belgium alive will be a sober necessity for some time to come. This winter, with three million people wanting clothes again—for a certain proportion of the gifts were useless, another freezing winter is upon the stricken people and there are far too few of the first lot to go around, anyway—no one who understands the problem will consent to the importation of worn clothing.

Besides, there are the idle hands to think of. Today Belgium and northern France are darkened workshops, where twenty months ago nine million people toiled—toiled with an intelligent doggedness that within a generation had made that section of Europe the richest, per capita, in the world. Right after the necessity for food and shelter comes the necessity for finding these people something, anything, to do.

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Already great ouvoirs (workshops) have come into being in Brussels, Antwerp, Liege and half a dozen of the smaller cities. Here, for many months, men and women have been making over America's old clothes. It is tedious labor; its only advantage, aside from keeping the people at work and together, is that Belgian hands can devise two or three garments for themselves out of the capacious originals. The pittance that pays the workers is provided by the government, which ultimately, of course, will re-collect from the people. Yet, once gathered in warm halls, once really at work again, once earning even a little money, and it has become next to impossible to drive the people away.

The work-spirit, even under a paralysis lasting eighteen months, is still strong in Belgium.

For months past, with practically no more gift clothes to make over and with what new cloth existed in Belgium at the outbreak of the war exhausted, the search of the Belgian committees for material to keep the ouvoirs open has had an air of desperation. New cloth only is wanted, for that alone is economical, and economy, with three million dependents to look after, is essential. Yet the Belgians alone can import nothing. Once they were a weaving nation, importing their raw material, but not a loom has turned within their borders since the war began. The little country is hermetically sealed from the world by a double blockade, the Germans on land and the English on the sea. The neutral commission for relief, which has obtained permission from both of the warring giants to import a minimum ration of grain, are the only possible saviors. And along with the necessary figures on the clothing situation the Belgians have communicated to their American friends their desperate mood, for as the winter lengthens the mortality rate among the underclad members of the population has risen as it might in a typhus camp.

ONE Hundred and Twenty-Five Million Dollars' Worth of These Garments Were Distributed Among the Homeless—A New System of Distribution Now in Vogue, and It Needs the Support of America—Three Million People Without Clothes—Cloth Is Being Collected and the Belgians Themselves Make It Into Garments—In the Great Workshops.

PREPARING AMERICAN CLOTHING FOR DISTRIBUTION IN A WORKSHOP IN BRUSSELS.

Most of the supply of cheer in Belgium nowadays is generated, however, in these very ouvoirs whose existence is threatened from week to week. They are only huge sewing circles, of course, and from propinquity and warmth and work and chatter somehow comfort comes. In the Brussels ouvoir 15,000 people report for work regularly, a few taking their sewing home, but the bulk of them stitching side by side daily. The discipline is not rigorous, the spirit of voluntary partnership in a common undertaking is kept up, there are no restrictions of class or religion, all but children of school age may attend, while the pay—from 3 to 8 francs a week, which is from 60 cents to $1.60 in our money—suffices for existence when it is eked out by any of the various sorts of help offered elsewhere by the authorities.

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The Antwerp ouvoir, which is a model in the quality of its output and in its social organization, not only looks like a titanic sewing circle, but sounds like one. What you hear as you enter the great hall seems to be the buzz of loud conversation. Then you perceive it is a song, coming from more than a thousand bent heads in view on the main floor. Regularly, with admirable melody and rhythm, it rises and falls all day. They are chanting the folk songs of old Flanders, which are legion, and which have been rehearsed oftener in Flanders this year than ever since the time of the present singers' ancestors, who invented them. A famous Belgian choirmaster has compiled a book of them for this particular ouvoir, and each worker has a copy. Once a week the master comes to lead the singing.

As to the effect of it all on the Belgian people, no one will forget the days when countesses worked harder than peasants and when the wives of millionaires learned the hearts of the poor at first hand. As a nation Belgium was perhaps in need of just such a lesson in democracy, in spite of its relatively equal distribution of wealth.

Today hundreds of Belgians, from every stage in the social scale, say they are grateful for this aspect of the discipline that comes from disaster. In Antwerp the wife of one titled millionaire, set as far apart from toil as her inherited millions could place her, has for a year raked from the impoverished city material for her ouvoir under difficulties that would have amazed a very extraordinary business man. The wife of another has superintended the daily work and health of 8,000 people on the roll call of the same ouvoir. Both of these women are at their desks at 8:30 in the morning and leave at 6. Their pay is, of course, nothing. And in Brussels, Namur, Ghent and Malines the bearers of historic names have come to know the meaning of work as the poor understand it.

Incidentally, the number of citizens who are now serving without pay in Belgium and northern France is, all told, between 30,000 and 40,000. Theoretically they come from the "well-to-do" classes and can afford to make a gift of their services. But actually the only well-to-do people left are a handful of the very rich in each city, who have refused to join the general exodus of their class to England and France. Most of the volunteer helpers come from those who are barely able to keep out of that utterly dependent one-third of the nation which is in the bread line.

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Yet all that these unpaid helpers ask is that the food distribution and the ouvoirs be continued.

In northern France, that rich industrial slice of the larger nation occupied by the Germans, the work of the commission for relief is newer and the need is stark. For weeks during the current cloth famine the ouvoirs in Lille, Valenciennes and St. Quentin have been turning the flour bags in which the early supplies from America came into underclothing and waists. Thousands of school children and young girls have gone about in these fantastic garments. Sacking is a poor covering in a climate where wool, and plenty of it, is a stern necessity from November to April. For five months of the year the clammy chill which clings to the wet soil of the low countries is somewhat more penetrating than the cold of a Massachusetts winter.

What will America do with the 3,000,000 Belgians and Frenchmen who are thrown on her conscience? The United States is the only great nation on the face of the globe at peace, which means, among other things, that while Europe faces economic ruin, our pockets are filling. And for twelve months one-third of a brave people have been slowly, in the matter of clothes, approaching destitution. Thanks to a marvelous organization of relief, managed by Americans and partially supported by American money, food moves into Belgium across the Dutch border in a just-adequate stream. Shelter and a minimum of bread there are, but disease and death may easily creep in by the other open door.

Four million dollars' worth of new cloth is wanted, or preferably the money to buy that amount, for the commission has exact knowledge as to the sort needed and exact information as to the cheapest markets. Winter trebled the need, and the winter is more than half gone by. When will the money come, and where from?

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CENTRAL CLOTHING WAREHOUSE IN BRUSSELS, FROM WHICH CLOTHING IS SENT TO ALL PARTS OF THE COUNTRY.

A Surgical Magnet.

AN ingenious surgical instrument is intended to extract particles of iron and steel from the human eye. It consists of a powerful electro-magnet mounted on a stand running on casters. When an operation is to be performed one end of the magnet is cautiously brought near the patient's eye. If a piece of steel or iron is imbedded in the eyeball the patient experiences a sharp pain as the metallic sliver forces its way through the tissues and flies to the magnet. The injury to the eye is said to be less than that caused by using a knife.